

[News](#) > [Mobile Patriots roll over Hurlburt Commandos 85-79](#), sort of

Mobile Patriots roll over Hurlburt Commandos 85-79

Posted 10/6/2009 Updated 10/6/2009 [Email story](#) [Print story](#)

[SHARE](#)

by Airman 1st Class Joe McFadden
1st Special Operations Wing Public Affairs

10/6/2009 - **HURLBURT FIELD, Fla.** -- The Mobile Patriots defeated the Hurlburt Commandos 85-79 during the fourth annual Wheelchair Basketball Exhibition Game at the Aderholt Fitness Center Oct. 1.

The game was played to recognize National Disability Employment Awareness month, held every October.

A dozen Airmen from the 1st Special Operations Wing took on the Patriots, a Gulf Coast division three National Wheelchair Basketball Association team, in recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Apart from being strapped into a wheelchair for the duration of the game, there are a few key differences between wheelchair basketball and standard basketball.

For example, when the ball is in a player's possession, it may be placed in the player's lap. But for every two spins of the wheel chair, the ball must be dribbled at least once. Also if a player throws a ball at a defensive player's wheelchair and the ball goes out of bounds, it is a violation on the offense.

While the Patriots are accustomed to such rules, the officials made many exceptions for the Commandos. Those exceptions didn't help much though, as the Patriots scored 43 points in the first quarter alone. Even with the 50 free points the Commandos were spotted at the beginning of the game, their chances to break their three-year losing streak were starting to look grim.

Chief Master Sgt. John DeSalle, Air Force Special Operations Command chief enlisted manager, participated in the game for the first time this year and said it was not as easy as he thought it would be.

"It's like you're sitting on the ground," Chief DeSalle said, comparing it to regular basketball.

Regarding the Patriots' offense, Chief DeSalle mentioned teamwork as one of the team's collective strengths.

"They know what they're doing and where to block," Chief DeSalle said. "It takes two of us to block one of them, and that frees up most of their offense."

The Commandos stepped up their defense in the second quarter and allowed the Patriots to score just 12 points. Chief Master Sgt. Oscar Mackin, 505th Command and Control Wing command chief, scored the only points for the Commandos in the first half, leaving the halftime score at 55-52.

During the third quarter, the Commandos went to the free throw line three times for fouls, presenting their only opportunity to score points. As they ended the quarter, little had been done to stop the Patriots who were leading 77-55.

At the start of the fourth quarter, the officials switched the scores to give the Commandos the lead. The Patriots easily handled the change and tied the game at 77 points with 7:43 left on the clock. 2nd Lt. Mark Lazane, 1st Special Operations Wing public affairs, scored the only points for the Commandos in the fourth quarter.

A final buzzer shot by the Patriots sealed the Commandos' fate, as they lost their fourth straight game to the Patriots with a final score of 85-79, although without the generous scorekeeping and officiating, the real score would have been 117-7.

"General Custer had no idea," Col. Greg Lengyel, 1st Special Operations Wing commander, said about the final score and the opportunity to face the Patriots.

From a spectator's perspective, the Patriots displayed basketball skills and tricks similar to those used by the Harlem Globetrotters, often using the Commandos as props to showcase their talents.

"That's a fair comparison," said Col. Mark Johnson, 1st Special Operations Mission Support Group commander, who played for the Commando squad for the second year in a row.

"I'm amazed by their agility," he said about the Patriots. "They have used their skills and talents to make things more than equal."

With respect to National Disability Employment Awareness month, Colonel Johnson said the game highlighted the ability of people to overcome adversity.

"This event is all about recognizing that everyone can contribute," he said. "If you have the means and resources to see it through, you can overcome anything."

Blake Loftin, a player for the Patriots, is also a member of the University of Alabama's wheelchair basketball team. Mr. Loftin, who has been playing the sport for six years, said he appreciated the chance to play against senior personnel during his first game at Hurlburt Field.

"It's a nice way to show what it's like to play in a wheelchair. The Commandos are fit and all in shape, but it's harder than it looks," he said. "This was a very cool opportunity. I'm honored by what everyone here has done for us."

After the game, Colonel Lengyel presented a certificate of appreciation to the Patriots. The silent auction and concessions during

Photos

1 of 4



Col. Greg Lengyel, 1st Special Operations Wing commander, prepares to get the ball during the opening tip against a member of the Mobile Patriots, a National Wheelchair Basketball Association team, at the fourth annual Wheelchair Basketball Exhibition Game at the Aderholt Fitness Center at Hurlburt Field Oct. 1. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Julianne Showalter)

[Download HiRes](#)

Inside Hurlburt

Search

[Find it](#)

[Advanced Search](#)

[View All RSS](#)

the game raised nearly \$4,000 for the Patriots' organization.

The Patriots are a non-profit team that was formed in 1984 to highlight the talents of physically-challenged athletes. For the last 10 years, the team has finished in the top 25 teams in America. This year, three of the Patriots were recruited by the University of Alabama which is only one of 10 colleges in the country to offer a collegiate wheelchair basketball team.

Comments

No comments yet.

[Add a comment](#)